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# Chant may gain traction under new missal, but hymnody's place secure

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**WASHINGTON** -- Although the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal has eliminated the use of the word "song" from the General Instruction promulgated just eight years earlier in favor of the word "chant," don't be so quick to ditch those hymnals.

The hymns that have been part and parcel of Catholic worship are likely to continue for some time to come.

"Our interpretation of 'chant' is in using the word 'chant' in a generic way, a translation of (the Latin) 'cantus,' 'that which is sung," said Father Richard Hilgartner, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Divine Worship.

When the church uses "chant" in the General Instruction, Father Hilgartner told Catholic News Service, it is "really talking about what texts are sung, not the musical form."

Of course, tell that to the blogosphere, home of rhetorical volleys back and forth on every issue, the new General Instruction included. "If it weren't for the blogosphere, we wouldn't be having this conversation," Father Hilgartner told CNS. "We'd just be going about our work."

On Nov. 27, the first Sunday of Advent, the new English translation of the third edition of the Roman Missal will begin to be used parishes in the United States, Canada and other English-speaking countries.

"It's a very hot topic right now in the Catholic blogosphere," said Jerry Galipeau, associate publisher at World Library Publications in the Chicago suburb of Franklin Park, Ill., and himself a liturgical music composer and a blogger on liturgical issues.

"There's a camp that's becoming entrenched, (saying) that the proper antiphons that are found in the missal are as essential to the liturgy as the reading, and no one would ever replace the proper antiphons with something else."

In liturgical terms, "proper" refers to texts used for a particular day, feast or rite. Each Mass includes verses from Scripture as entrance antiphon and Communion antiphons. However, in current U.S. practice, they are most often used when there is no music for the Mass -- and even then not always included -- and, when included, almost always recited.

"It has been kind of been under the radar, it's ebbed and flowed in history. Mass propers have been staples since the seventh century," said Jeffrey Tucker, a proponent for the use of chant with the new missal. Tucker, who sings in a schola in Auburn, Ala., is a blogger, assistant editor of the journal Sacred Music, and publications director of the Church Music Association of America, a group Galipeau called "small but loud."

After the Second Vatican Council in 1963 permitted the Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular, "there was a lot

of confusion that followed," Tucker said. "Pretty much there has been no effort (regarding chanted antiphons) in this direction since 1963 in the Catholic world."

How music is used at Mass has evolved since Vatican II, according to Galipeau. He identified the 1970s as "when the terminology of the 'four-hymn syndrome' began to be challenged. Basically, it was 'Music in Catholic Worship,' the (U.S.) bishops' first document on music after the council, that said it's the acclamations at the Mass that have the priority -- the Holy, the Eucharistic Acclamation. Instead of singing four hymns at Mass, we need to change our thought completely and sing the Mass."

Father Hilgartner gave an example of how an antiphon could be interpreted musically. "If the antiphon that's printed in the missal is Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' a legitimate use would be 'The King of Love My Shepherd Is,' which is a hymn."

He added that at the Mass he celebrated earlier in the day of his CNS interview, "I used 'Where Charity and Love Prevail.' It's chant, but it's a hymn. There are those who want to turn this into a battle between chanted antiphons and strophic hymnody," but the new General Instruction is "not that restrictive."

Tucker said the Church Music Association of America has already published a book of English chants for schola use with sales of 1,400 copies, "which by any standard is a best-seller." That figure would be dwarfed, though, by the number of copies of a hymnal like "Worship" or "Gather Comprehensive" in the pew racks of just a couple of large suburban parishes.

Galipeau, in a July 11 post in his "Gotta Sing Gotta Pray" blog, said that at his majority-black Chicago parish, "I just don't think this whole argument about the singing of the propers will ever amount to a hill of beans to these parish people. The people have grown accustomed to singing hymns and songs at the entrance and at Communion from a wide variety of traditions. ... A different antiphon every single Sunday might be a bit too challenging for Catholics."

Tucker, in a July 13 post on his "Chant Cafe" blog, said that from his experiences with using chanted antiphons as Mass, "the people in the pews don't rush up after Mass and say, 'What a fantastic performance today, that was just what I needed!' Instead, they find themselves thinking and praying through the performers and through the music toward eternity. ... All we are saying is give propers a chance."

Chant has a legitimate place in Catholic worship, Father Hilgartner said, but "there's room for other legitimate cultural adaptations, which includes the form that music for liturgy takes." He added the word "song" was removed from the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal because "it sounds secular, even when it's preceded by 'liturgical.'"

And what, if anything, preceded chant? "Likely, it was hymnody because it was memorable," Father Hilgartner said. "St. Paul does that whole great hymn to Christ -- 'though he was in the form of God.' Is that early hymnody? Is that used liturgically? We don't really know. As one of my liturgy professors used to say, we've lost the videotape."

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